(c) whether there are reports that Indian workers who migrate to Gulf countries are facing inhuman treatment there;

(d) the number of Indians jailed in various Gulf countries for offences related to migration, country-wise, as on today; and

(e) whether there is any proposal to chalk out a comprehensive policy on migration for the benefit of Indians working in abroad?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It is estimated that the number of Indians working in the Gulf would be close to 4 million. Their State-wise and country-wise break-up is, however, not available.

(c) Complaints are received from time to time about the hardships faced by Indian workers in Gulf countries.

(d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(e) There is no such proposal at present.

Illegal recruiting agencies

1055. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that illegal recruiting agencies create so many hardship to the Keralite job-seekers in the Gulf countries;

(b) whether Government would consider to conduct a detailed study on the sufferings of Indian job-seekers in the Gulf labour camps and redress their grievances;

(c) whether the State Government of Kerala have submitted any suggestion for the amendments of Emigration Act 1983; and

(d) whether Government would consider to introduce appropriate amendments in the Emigration Act to safeguard the interest of job seekers?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) Yes, Sir. Complaints have been received against illegal recruiting agencies from various quarters, including Indian Missions in the Gulf countries.

(b) Government is aware of the hardships faced by the workers. No detailed study appears necessary. However, Indian Missions and posts abroad take up complaints against the foreign employees with the relevant local authorites/foreign sponsors with a view to solve the problems of workers including improvement in their working conditions, expediting the process of law and obtaining due justice. In deserving cases, they try to get the workers repatriated by coordinating with concerned recruiting agents and the Protector General of Emigrants.

(c) and (d) Proposals relating to amendments to the Emigration Act, 1983 were circulated amongst the concerned Central Ministries and State Governments for their comments. Suggestions were received form various States including Government of Kerala and other Ministries/ Departments on the proposed amendments. The Act is proposed to be amended to provide, *inter-alia*, more deterent punishment and harsher penalties to illegal recruiting agencies.

Voting rights to Indian citizens working abroad

1056. PROF. P.J. KURIAN: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering the question of giving voting rights to Indian citizens working abroad;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the State Government of Kerala has made such a request; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) and (b) Yes. A proposal for giving voting rights to Indian citizens who are away from their place of residence on account of employment, education or otherwise has already been approved by the Government. A bill in this regard is expected to be introduced in the current session of the Parliament.

(c) and (d) Yes. Government of Kerala and some Indian Associations in the Gulf region have made such requests and the Govt. has acceded to their requests.